

**SPEECH FOR CLAUDE ALLEN
DEPUTY SECRETARY
TOWN HALL MEETING
“ENSURING THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF OUR
NATION’S FAMILY CAREGIVERS”**

Good morning, and thank you so very much, Michael O’Grady, for those kind words and welcome to the Department. Michael O’Grady was just confirmed last Thursday by the Senate Judiciary Committee. I’ll be pleased to report back to the Secretary on how quickly you jumped into your role as Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. I thank you for co-sponsoring this event.

I also share in thanking Josefina Carbonell and John Hoff for the tremendous job they do on behalf of older Americans and people with disabilities and their caregivers. Our entire country is in your debt.

I also want to thank and acknowledge the caregivers who are here with us today, let me say, on behalf of President Bush, Secretary Thompson and my own behalf, a very sincere thank you. You are members of what the President calls "the armies of compassion," and we honor you for your outstanding service you provide, day in and day out.

My friends, the challenges facing long-term care in our country are great. Family caregivers have always been the main source of long-term care services in the United States. Over 95% of adults who have physical limitations have family members involved in providing personal care for them. Today, there are over 20 million households providing care to older adults and people with disabilities. By 2050, as the aging baby boomer generations becomes in need of long-term care, we estimate that over 40 million households will rely on informal caregivers to provide long-term care.

Informal caregivers, a few of whom we will be privileged to hear from today, have “can-do” attitudes, sacrifice themselves, their time, and seemingly endless supply of energy for their family members, friends or neighbors. Today we want to talk about them, their needs, and what we can do for them.

Caring for our caregivers is such an important message, my friends. Caregivers are too often unaware of the stresses of caregiving on their own health and well-being. Research, like that of Dr. Richard Schultz, clearly shows that caregiving comes at a cost to caregivers—in emotional, physical and financial stress. Caregiving contributes to the risk of psychiatric and physical diseases, and in some cases, may prematurely cause death. Most caregivers at some point in time experience signs of heavy emotional strain, resulting in stress, chronic fatigue, and depression. These are all signs your body is sending you. And we are here to highlight things caregivers, and those that love them, can do to help.

Today, we want to encourage caregivers to take steps and make choices to improve their own health and well-being---there are many resources that are available to caregivers, resources that can help you—either through respite care, social service supports in your local communities. I understand that at the end of the program today, tables will be set up to share state and local resources that are available.

I know there it is pretty hard to tell a caregiver to work out, or go to the movies to relax, when there is no one available to care for your loved one, or you are so tired that you would rather sleep if any free time was available. We recognize that there is no "one size fits all" approach to helping caregivers get the support they need—but we agree that we need solutions that will help caregivers where they are, tailored to different situations. We need to get the message out caregivers that it is not selfish to focus

on your own health and well being when you are a caregiver—it is also an important part of the job.

In the last several years, with the National Family Caregiver Support Program, research sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, ASPE and AOA, and innovative demonstration programs such as the Cash and Counseling Program, we have begun to see some real breakthroughs in helping caregivers get the support they need. Respite care, health promotion programs, and program flexibilities will only get us part of the way. We need state and local public health officials, as well as caregiver support associations to continue to develop and implement promising programs that can support, educate and motivate caregivers to maintain and improve their own health.

National organizations, such as: the National Family Caregivers Association, Family Caregiver Alliance, National Alliance for Caregiving, FamilyCare America, AARP, Alzheimer's Association, Easter Seals, National Council on the Aging, and many other are here today, helping us reach out to caregivers, designing programs and find real solutions. I want to acknowledge their presence here today, and the important role they play.

The next thirty years will determine our success or failure. We must act now, and reach out to caregivers, before the challenge of the aging baby boomer generation is fully upon us. Our future as a Nation depends upon the health and well-being of our country's caregivers. With your help today, we can encourage caregivers to find the supports they need, and identify promising programs that can successfully reach out to caregivers.

Thank You.

Claude Allen
Transition to Nancy Regan's Letter

I'd like to read a letter from one of our Nation's most well-known caregivers, the former First Lady, Nancy Reagan. When she found out that we were having this event, she prepared a message to share with the caregivers here today, and hoped it could also be shared with caregivers across the Nation. I am honored to be able to read it to you today...

Claude Allen
Transition to 1st Testimonial –Donald “Mac” Showers

I would like to introduce three of the “heros” we are talking about today. They are family caregivers, and each has prepared a short statement, describing from their own perspective, there personal experience as a family caregiver. I want to thank them for coming today, because we realize that as much as we like to have these events with Administration officials, the ability we have to reach out to other caregivers, is directly linked to understanding, from each caregiver's perspective, what is most important.

Our first speaker is Mac Showers, a Retired Rear Admiral, who cared for his wife over the last 20 years as she battled with Alzheimer's disease.

{Mac S. Speaks}

Remarks for Mac Showers: I was very impressed with the fact that you started your own support group, and were able to connect to others in the caregiver support group.

Our second speaker is Katryna Gold, who has been a caregiver to many individuals in her family over the past 13 years.

{Katryna G. Speaks}

Remarks for Katryna Gould: What a compelling story. Balancing the roles of wife, mother, daughter-in-law, and daughter—while simultaneously being such a dedicated and devoted caregiver for so many—is quite amazing.

Our last speaker is Bill Kays, who was a primary caregiver for his wife, Pearl Kays, who had Alzheimers disease.

{Bill K. Speaks}

Remarks for Bill Kays: Thank you. What a remarkable story, and how lucky your wife to have you as her champion.

**Here possible follow-up questions for the caregivers if you would like to ask and/or time permitting...

(Mac) That doesn't seem like an easy thing to do. Could you tell us a bit more about the people you met at the support group, and how talking about things with others can help your health or ability to be a good caregiver.

(Katryna) If you had to say one thing to the millions of caregivers out there today, one simple thing they could do each day, that wouldn't take a lot of time, to help them cope with the stresses of caregiving, what would it be?

(Bill) I am curious, prior to your heart attack and surgery, did you have any warning signs that let you know your own health was in jeopardy?

Introduction for John Hoff:

Thank you all again, really a remarkable group of individuals.

Now, I would like to introduce John Hoff, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for our office of Planning and Evaluation, who has been a leader and innovator at developing new options, through research and demonstrations, that support our Nation's family caregivers.